

**then, memes II**

**Tom Corrado**







*again, for you . . .*

*You write what you want to write  
in a way that it has to be.*

- Anne Carson

iPhone voicenails take you back to Stage IV intimacies  
but now you can't remember . . .  
and you're being stalked  
by a string of declarative sentences  
whose hoodies have unhinged the imperative . . .  
It's no longer enough to ignore this  
or the commodification of life extension  
in the dairy section of Warhol's 10,000+ 35mm pics . . .  
Many make waiting a career . . .  
You saw this yourself in your last trip  
down breakdown lane . . .  
The '50's series *Omnibus* was telecast live  
for crackers in *Chelsea Girls*  
with the Joker's *here we go* and Frost's *you come too* . . .  
*Anatomical World's* skulls and skeletons  
have decided to go (window shopping)  
with fish and chips . . .  
The rigidity of footnotes stalenates you  
on odd numbered days  
during months that begin with a vowel  
when 0.7mm leads prove to be too soft  
for jotting memoirs of backpedaling . . .  
The inconsistencies overwhelm . . . and increase  
at an alarming rate . . .  
Just in time for the holidays, yes? . . .  
With worries of internet penetration  
at all time highs . . .  
Lady Day's *I can't get started* forecasts a cold front  
accompanying a highly detailed index  
with entries that - according to *The New Yorker's*  
Dan Chaisson - *cover everything from hiking to*  
*honeymooning to beekeeping and braiding,*  
*allowing readers to track Sylvia Plath's imagination*

*as her poems evolved . . .*  
*in a voice . . . true to [her] own weirdnesses . . .*  
Your reminiscences take me back  
to an old roster of players -  
color-coded . . . and sized . . . for maximum effect . . .  
The method is so young it totters . . .  
But you've heard it all from attachés  
who roll with the credits . . .  
The list bloats . . .  
and your piercings have a curfew . . .  
Once upon a yellow romper . . .  
around 30 . . . give or take . . .  
The script reads several *oral* exchanges  
a phrase linked to homespun . . .  
as in *the winter of our fall* . . .  
But who directed the run-through? . . .  
and who were the sequentials . . .  
or the catch-as-catch-cans? . . .  
Your iPhone vibrates with coconut balm  
wondering about the *older, regular*  
whose gift was *gab* . . .  
The stop-action . . . disabled . . .  
or, rather, who stop-actioned the disabled? . . .  
*Looking for Mr. Goodbar* elevates to happenstance . . .  
I'll see your *goodbar* and raise you twenty . . . with  
Diane Keaton . . . or Telly *Who loves ya, baby?* Savalas . . .  
or any of a number of extras . . .  
then downhill . . . through the thick growth  
at brain drain . . .  
But will you see it coming? . . .  
You are involuntarily committed . . . to something . . .  
to nothing . . .  
to see it through . . . your history of walking



the nooks and crannies of flâneurs smirking through  
costume changes . . . and letters of the alphabet  
with everyone croaking . . . everyone trying to get  
soberer . . . and soberer . . .  
The lowest common drama will do, yes? . . .  
It's all kindling, I suppose . . .  
Like the caboose in that strange fairy tale  
of Bach's motif . . .  
tuning slides maxed . . . daytripping across shallows . . .  
maneuvering roll calls  
to bring out the best in Netflix . . .  
You assume arpeggiation . . . swoon dyslexics with  
Bayesian reversals . . . spiked with the odds you've been  
messing with on the off ramp . . .  
when the probability of words mutated . . .  
circumambulating . . . and elementary my dear Watson  
knowing that castling is the only move  
involving two pieces . . .  
Meanwhile the unruffledness of days  
splattered with snow . . .  
A trio of clowns . . . random in tandem . . .  
fresh from a nightmare . . . hand out free passes . . .  
to open mics . . . now closed . . .  
A time for revision . . . and repetition . . . looms . . .  
The unwelcomed clone of your selfie is on hold . . .  
choking back backstories of incidentals  
to bring off-color to passersby  
exiting kiosks on the unnamed streets  
of someone's hometown . . .  
You search for links to direct you  
thorough the avalanche  
of late-night palm readings  
by recent converts to mine . . .

Pasta will be passed around without remorse . . .  
without malice aforethought . . .  
with trial balloons launched without beta testing . . .  
*It's OK to be remaindered, he/she said, now that the  
everyday is signed sealed and delivered without  
return receipt requested . . .*  
It seems foolish to think about ins and outs . . .  
the cantonine trying to show how opacity descends upon  
us . . . and we skip the freebies . . .  
the duplicitous star-struck lovers  
their lapse among leap-froggers . . .  
fascination shortlisted . . .  
You have set your sights on leaving everything out . . .  
regretting the insertion . . . again? . . .  
the rearrangement some would call *louche* . . .  
You worry fastidiousness will undo you  
especially now with your backpack gaping . . .  
utensils giggling their inexactitude . . .  
imposing drama on the rescheduled reshoot  
awaiting revisions . . .  
So many continue to be damaged with the dawn . . .  
the world as Hawking predicted  
becoming uninhabitable . . .  
while uncharitables plot the canvas and push paint to  
escape the tired conventions dull patter sour  
confessions  
moved by boredom from the fringe  
to critical spotlight . . .  
words reigniting mental gymnastics  
meriting a trip to the mall  
handicapping cluster flies snowboarding dry powder . . .  
After which variations on themes . . . enter the frame  
goop fogging the brain . . .

neural networks and all that . . .  
irrespective of how much you practiced impossibilities  
which took time away from being held upside down until  
you got your balance . . .  
Mosaic faces urge you to monochrome your life  
to recommit to sobriety . . . hedge your bets  
while odysseyites board short stories  
with subtitled cigarettes  
inviting you to re-up . . .  
Miscounts abound . . .  
Most if not all seek this, yes? . . .  
Yet somehow, somewhere, there are average nuclear  
families living in average nuclear waste dumps  
trumped-up with average nuclear happiness . . .  
Blond best friends are trying to make a go of it . . .  
convinced they are destined to meet  
the most famous person alive . . .  
Waiting for . . . then waiting again . . .  
Recruiting sandmen for graphical interfaces  
with sans serifs  
brought back as uncommoners . . .  
Imagine the confusion . . . the scale sliding  
all over the slippery slope of mastery  
operationalized as blips in a sea of screens . . .  
monochromatic life savers  
wrapped in tinfoil . . .  
The scene opens with paint-by-number distractions . . .  
Odysseyites clamor steamer trunks  
when last calls led to back rooms where  
opportunists drifted in and out of snowcastles  
pocketing nonchalance for iPhone moments  
saved to the cloud . . .  
gaming tables alive with soup(er) bowls

for aficionados awaiting pat-downs ...  
the halftime show drawn and quartered  
amid controversy ...  
An ultrasound tech ... presents with pomegranates  
small talks the front page  
leaning in ... as if quarterbacking ...  
Moments bespeak moments ...  
The reconfiguration of camera angles ...  
speechless at an open mic ...  
the ride home a hacked password ...  
Why now the interruption? ...  
Friends of friends arrive with leeks  
count the take of the toll ...  
A scuffle in the meat department is captured  
on 36 iPhones ...  
Bigger ... and BIGGER protein ...  
Is a life lived in faux fur a life lived? ...  
Another interruption ...  
You retreat to a labyrinth of overheard words ...  
grammatically indifferent words ...  
words in yellow vests ... SANCTUARY ...  
Your impatience with the inanimate  
grows with the stick-built ...  
the accountability of staking seedless tomatoes  
as artifacts for the impossible ...  
Are the wine legs as they should be? ...  
You know the drill ... when will you decide? ...  
Self-starters are bused to a starting line ...  
confused by lifestyle changes  
and made to consider a cache of meds  
with no guarantee ...  
The comedy of monotony informs your late nights ...  
There was a time ... not that long ago ...

Take this down . . . breathe in . . . hold . . .  
breathe out . . . Here's another . . . breathe in . . .  
Calling your lost dog . . . who isn't lost  
as if you need to tell someone  
that something strange is about to happen . . .  
a stylishly ill-advised moment  
walking through the neighborhood  
calling your lost dog . . . who isn't lost . . .  
The incompleteness hits you on the ride home  
and you fashion descenders  
where mistakes have real consequences . . .  
400 forgeries is nothing to poo-poo . . .  
Simplification made simple, yes? . . .  
as in the final scene where  
the morning's cereal box speaks  
to Scorsese's rat crawling out the door . . .  
This day like a few others lately feels rigged . . .  
and grocery shopping won't be enough  
to fend off the players - extras? - queuing up  
at the entrance to your exit . . .  
The jigsaw puzzle of attraction  
with pieces scattered throughout your dreamscape  
prompts you to play the mask  
with a rush as diagrammed . . . at eye level . . .  
Armchair vacancies rant the airspace . . .  
retire their uniform in the middle of the game  
and leave . . . to dissolve . . .  
in the current . . .  
The facsimile life . . . the well-oiled facsimile life . . .  
aborts the highway . . .  
curtailing alternatives with bipolarity  
for archivists on coffee break . . .  
How did you know the dancer

was about to attempt a villanelle? . . .  
Bystanders capture moments . . .  
before and after . . . after and before . . .  
and again . . . but remain glued to the well-trodden . . .  
And you? . . .  
The late-winter cookout in the backyard  
with everything growing silent  
riding the elevator into the snow-filled basement  
categorizing Kondo's declutter:  
clothes, books, papers, *komono*, mementos  
sparking photographic memories  
of late-night talk shows  
the predation . . . and willingness  
to report that it was a joke . . . it was plastic . . .  
keep your hands raised . . .  
It becomes second-nature . . .  
icing on the endgame . . .  
the snow without surcease  
as you sweep flakes into the palm of your left hand  
a shopping cart out of control in a parking lot . . .  
You are sprung to joy on the treadmill at the gym  
while on the wall TVs  
feature muted images of raised hands . . .  
The color-coding continues despite warnings  
that elevated bowls may cause bloat . . .  
You tend to take things in stride . . .  
But then you find that the sensation diminishes  
with repetition . . . Proust's disappointment  
with his second and third swallow of tea . . .  
the banality of it all . . . a constant . . .  
Memorializing the parties of the unlined and bushy  
slipping tongues nonchalantly  
as if the clock had indeed been stopped . . .

No need to calculate the obliqueness now . . .  
wait for the commercial break  
when you can stretch and raid the fridge  
and adjust the cushions  
out of earshot of the insinulators in the walls . . .  
An unstrung marionette finds words  
in the redacted script . . . the basement trashed  
by cleaners sent in to do the white thing . . .  
Indeed . . . the blurbiness of blurbs:  
I write you . . . you write me . . .  
bundling software for coders  
as the night twinkles with bug juice in trash cans  
lined with garbage bags . . .  
I am become . . . a lineman for the county  
splicing telephone lines . . .  
as an aperitif . . . an insinuation . . .  
the enthrallment of the table read  
with you costumed  
for yet another audition . . .  
the runner-up benched on fouls . . .  
This will be a night to remember  
a Titanic-ranning-iceberg night to remember  
and you're buying into a stairway to heaven  
to the magical realism  
of a room filled with mirrors . . .  
gorging yourself on ample food  
at the wolf's table  
the-wolf-with-groping-paws-table  
before engaging the matrix  
of permutations . . . and combinations . . .  
the morning's ride back to the future  
as time clocks Round Three . . .  
and the gappiness of cubicles

minics *The Shining's* snowy maze  
while Freud and Jung  
arm wrestle for your backstory . . .  
the doubtful guest insisting she is *Anna* Freud  
at the free-throw line  
during the madness of March  
which some documentarian chortled *ain't much* . . .  
Daily we review takeaways . . .  
the guns and roses . . . and guns . . . and . . .  
the bowed heads of aftermaths  
squeezing through metal detectors  
into three-ring circuses of misdirection:  
you can't go home again! . . .  
Your wake-up call went south  
bubble gum breathalyzer  
*Did it lose its flavor on the bedpost overnight?* . . .  
back to sleep  
with news anchors of pileups on the Interstate  
following the dotted line . . . again . . . and again . . .  
picking up pieces of span  
interspersed with recipes  
and promises of misappropriations  
and guest appearances  
on late-late-late-night talk shows . . .  
The House of Crazy is open for business . . .  
speeding along . . .  
with feigned nonchalance . . .  
but you knew that, yes? . . .  
as the Queen of Redaction . . . a bowl of protein . . .  
*can't get enough!* . . .  
Photo albums bloat . . .  
the way it was . . .  
the way they were . . .



the way we were . . .  
overdrawn bank accounts and selfies . . .  
pockets stuffed with aftermaths . . .  
they were game for anteing-up  
the pot speaking a dead language . . .  
Pity there wasn't an unfinished symphony  
for the sawtooth ensemble to finish . . .  
and now your phone is dead . . .  
and you're sweating indictment for buying a burger  
to get your kid into an ivy league school  
and you're ready to accept submissions  
for your 24-hour meltdown . . .  
Subsequent tête-à-têtes to air on Netflix . . .  
Hired hands hand in school colors . . . in the nick of  
the full shortage . . . if you know what I mean . . .  
Incidentals brim the showroom . . . vet orphanhood . . .  
The newly-hatched are cumbersome, yes? . . .  
but then you like the length of autofictions  
fabricating homeland depositions . . .  
some remotely . . . with strings attached . . .  
What did you mean by that anyway? . . .  
Summer showers continue to be inducted  
into a Hall of Fame of sorts . . .  
the lawn . . . awaits the morning's drill . . .  
Aceing the final, you are relieved  
of motion sickness . . .  
remembering the era when slide rules became the go-to  
for theme parks . . . every week strolling  
amid stopgappers . . . bobbysoxers  
packing incidentals on their way home . . .  
anguishing over choices made . . .  
crow's feet plummeting . . .  
You wake to a confused alphabet and into a diorama with

a cup of coffee following those who had stepped out . . .  
and vanished . . .  
The day sunshines snowbanks into hiding . . .  
Today's lecture on the *Gerty* episode in *Ulysses*  
held most but you found it formulaic . . .  
old guys getting off at the sight of young skin . . .  
There was a moment a bit ago when you had almost  
thought it through . . . or thought you could  
think it through . . .  
but that passed with Kindle's eInk . . . backlit and all . . .  
You look at yourself . . . and at the trees  
cavorting . . . preparing to give it another go . . .  
the clockwork gearing loud and exciting . . .  
Isn't it something how we grab ourselves  
following directions into the next scene  
and GPS our location . . .  
which may or may not play out as hoped? . . .  
But so what? . . .  
*In some strange way it's all good, yes?* . . .  
Lowering yourself into the cockpit . . .  
words belted in . . .  
another boldfaced expedition with you celebrating  
the flash nonfiction of Li Po  
*in the mountains on a summer day* . . .  
You share it . . . then google the follow-up  
which comes in at just under three minutes . . .  
How to explain the pencil portrait in the corner . . .  
the resemblance to Facebook  
sketched in someone else's hand? . . .  
You continue with one hundred and eleven -  
Maggie Nelson's, *The Latest Winter*, . . .  
the whole thing coming back to your draft and how even  
before the bell ended Round 12 you had managed

to skip the three chapters assigned  
for extra credit . . .  
You hawked the installation with misunderstanding . . .  
a French press with a migraine . . . while  
your cross country junkets came on Facebook . . .  
intriguing tongues . . . trying to fit into the holes  
dug into the script by a misdirected director  
whose profile you later learned had been lifted  
from a table of contents . . .  
Pasts spilled out . . . time borrowed . . .  
You began dropping clues  
with the insistence of a night out . . .  
This happened, yes? . . . and continues . . .  
After the alphabet, abutments were tuned  
to a minor key . . .  
Roundabouts tried to round you up but you loaded your  
brush with paint and insignificance . . .  
You were told it had all been written down . . .  
every last nuance . . . every misappropriation . . .  
every identity theft . . . circling  
like a flock of kites . . .  
The sketches you made in a ledger went undiscovered  
for over 120 years . . . Undisclosed players hung out  
at a neglected ball diamond  
falling into the wrong chapter . . . losing face . . .  
The matinee chides your hypothesis  
bulking the theorem into oblivion . . .  
Early arrivals arrive . . .  
captured on security cameras . . .  
he said . . . she said . . . they said . . .  
sample bags brim with notions from ATMs . . .  
fingers finger finger food . . .  
count doubloons . . . worry

the quivering idiocy of disintegration ...  
Instead of pampering the chef, perhaps? ...  
By the time the opposition dismounts  
the case will have been opened and shut ...  
The alleged victim ... vis-a-vis  
camera-shy sommeliers ...  
It's all in the sealed indictment ...  
at least according to Wikileaks ...  
Perhaps we shouldn't go there? ...  
Yes, let's not go there ...  
Perhaps we should relapse into past roles ...  
play it safe ...  
play the parts as written ...  
Of course you remember how much fun we had? ...  
You could have been a consumer ...  
You enjoy nuance ... worry that neither  
science nor religion adequately explains the world ...  
the simultaneity with its information overload  
kicking players to the curb ...  
The concert of minimalist parentheticals  
made for an interesting respite  
with its backstory on the inner life of trees ...  
And here comes the anxiety over broken links  
catapulting you into a message room of sorts  
where you try on different *what ifs*  
following each to its logical delusion  
which is a must ... if you must ...  
Perhaps the augmentation can be repaired  
effecting no less than a faux tectonic shift  
in paradigm ...  
If only life were a smidgen more palatable  
especially in those moments  
when the rubber fails to meet the road

and warnongers load their styluses . . .  
Meanwhile . . . a bed of flowers . . .  
spirited away by the porosity of sleep . . . a portal  
to past liaisons . . . your mother offering  
to pay your way . . . a phone call . . .  
grays-out the options . . .  
dreams of indifference eventually elbowing in  
as you review the video  
of summer's fiber deployment . . .  
You windowshop for a one-way ticket to immortality  
as the bell opens Round Seven  
to a color field measuring eight-feet-by-six-feet . . .  
footnoting the 600 square feet Rothko reneged on  
while Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* follows  
the two-point-five mil as it disappears  
into someone's backstory  
demonstrating for arts majors the phenomenon  
of the Rothkuvian blur . . . Lady Macbeth's  
*Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts,  
unsex me here . . .*

Enter, stage left, Sonnambulist 1:

*I jaywalk out of a lobotomy . . . I mean, c'mon . . .  
with lines like this? . . . Soliloquize me! . . .*

*A woman wrote Shakespeare? . . .*

*But didn't we already know that? . . .*

*Perhaps the archives bubble with happenstance  
and Little Miss Whatsherface shadows  
the Bard's ghost . . .*

This too will be stuffed into a time capsule  
as soon as . . . Enter, Sonnambulist 2:

*I texted "Taming of the Shrew" Katherine who blurted  
"My tongue will tell the anger of my heart . . ."*

The boxed set wins, yes? . . . especially

in those moments of fine-tooth combing . . .  
the beach at best . . . the least we could hope for  
in dawn's early flubbed lines . . .  
Whoa! . . . here's Sonnambulist 3  
with *Othello's* Emilia: *Let husbands know /*  
*Their wives have sense like them.*  
You trace the circumference of the argument  
centuries later bolstered by hard-core gas canisters  
spewing death . . . the exits sealed . . .  
the moments lapsing into forevermore . . .  
The bell ending the round? . . . Of course we knew . . .  
Reenactors reenact the Battle of Woodstock '69 . . .  
*It was here . . . The happening was here . . .*  
George C . . . again . . . First, do no harm . . .  
despite the hiss to litigate . . . We're off . . .  
while someone somewhere is sequestered . . .  
Is this how happenstance happens? . . .  
You have been approached to put together a skit for  
retirees who worry the fixed sitcom's bottom line . . .  
This is only the beginning of cats in Aviators . . .  
The free throw line chows down . . . as if in another life  
- your other life - the overture degrades  
to dissonance . . .  
The afterimage of your ticket to go beyond . . .  
in the metro window? . . .  
One after another . . . after another . . . one . . .  
after . . . the scene opens . . . jump start  
a late-model coupe? . . .  
Trying to stay focused on the endgame . . . lately,  
always the endgame . . . The months . . . One month later:  
enigmatic, if nothing . . .  
You had to jump start a late-model coupe . . .  
Ring it in with the weight of water . . .

Scene after scene . . . filling with water . . .  
Of course, that was then . . . of course . . .  
Illogicality and intentionality . . . strange whodunits . . .  
Traverse, as in, I traversed the pristine moment . . .  
The innate structure of the moment when you, for  
example, encounter the other . . . adrift,  
alphabetizing . . . hitting the pavement . . .  
drip-dried . . . as if off the end of Pollock's stick . . .  
after which he/she took it on the chin  
in a pop-up panopticon . . .  
The caption read *stick-in-the-muds*  
with Happy Hour promises color-coded for Slim Jims  
with night vision . . .  
the participants . . . again . . . flipping houses  
location . . . location . . . location . . .  
the psychodynamics of water coolers  
tweeting yesterday's easy access . . .  
But the last coat overlaid the patter . . .  
backstroking towards Brooklyn . . .  
the words rearranging themselves to fit the scene . . .  
several gym bags, backpacks, what have you . . .  
You studied the script . . . waited . . .  
Banging on the keys of an ancient Remington  
you try to craft poems immune to dissection  
yanking words letter by letter like teeth  
from your own River Styx . . .  
the boatman quietly urging his Evinrude  
with yelps from the middle of an estuary  
igniting the survivalist in weekend L. L. Beaners  
stringing franks alphabetically across a fire pit . . .  
They make the six-o'clock news . . .  
Does this help? . . . I mean . . . what is it? . . .  
I mean are you ready to dazzle

with a minor French ditty  
within walking distance of the Arc de Triomphe  
the flight over . . . scrambled . . . lowercase letters  
with smartphones *gag-ordered*? . . .  
Odysseyites living in yurts in the 'Dacks . . .  
undergo drawbridges . . .  
drop blurbs like bread crumbs . . . invent metaphors  
for trees whose bent limbs backstory crepey skin . . .  
I'm with you all the way . . . though truth be told  
I'm having a blast . . .  
though I couldn't think of a proper go-between  
so the induced quail from his poem was summoned . . .  
You seem unaware of your whereabouts . . .  
the voices from the air as loud as a triage of cats . . .  
soliloquies with ancient cuneiform symbols  
kayaking with ice bats which Carson . . . superstarishly  
influential enough to assume the mantle of dabbler . . .  
was quick to say *don't exist* . . .  
You worry the pot boiling over . . .  
fallen arches . . . tick-borne illnesses . . .  
gingivitis . . . while the Snellen Chart at DMV  
broadcasts your password  
to DUIs drying out in cursive . . .  
Eyeballs eyeball you up and down  
wasting time . . . waiting . . . in the wait line . . .  
with wait staff . . .  
There is little chance to buy into it  
with this blind date  
who seems engrossed . . . and then some . . .  
but what to do, yes? . . .  
A minute ago a disinterested party  
slipped through a portal  
inadvertently left ajar by a do-gooder



who will be written up . . .  
docked perhaps . . . as a one-act  
in the local theater group . . .  
Is it wrong to remain non-committal  
at this archaeological dig  
cluttered with dusty appendages . . .  
to hesitate ramping-up the ho-hunness  
infecting the meadow? . . .  
You have a full box of Crayolas  
waxing philosophically . . .  
somewhere . . . over the rainbow . . .  
It was the lowest common denominator . . .  
A safe harbor of sorts  
odysseyites waiting for the right moment  
ship-shape and what have you  
interested parties with protein drips . . .  
How did we lapse into forgetfulness? . . .  
The bar set higher . . . and higher . . .  
only to see it through to the next chapter  
if in fact that . . . The sprockets  
jammed when the games began  
with return receipts requested . . .  
Too much to expect a banana plantation  
or a blue lagoon for that matter . . . managing the scene  
as if players opened wide  
for the next transit strike . . .  
*La Traviata* speaks to you subliminally  
at Glinnerglass . . . while a summer breeze  
directs the wind section . . .  
the churlish conductor having become expert  
at rewinding graphic novels  
whose magic realism spins gesticulations  
that levitate a group of prestidigitators

enjoying a month in the country . . .  
Lakeside, naysayers badmouth  
a visual cliff . . . It may have been Chaucer's  
*Widower's Tale* . . . the pothead dialing in  
your height at Stewart's . . .  
his accomplices re-reading the backstory  
of Joe Green Investment Strategist  
who flips houses for émigrés qua enablers . . .  
as the morning's comeuppance  
tilts the pinball machine playing footsie  
with footloose mannequins brought in  
out of the rain to decompress . . .  
Coincidentally, the townhouse's address . . .  
These are a few, yes? . . .  
The skeletons in your closet gloat their Harleys  
as the bobber dips below the surface  
and you imagine a plate of crêpes with an old friend  
in a seaside town  
catching up on interpersonals  
the *who what when where whys*  
of your collaborative one-acts . . .  
You consider skipping the chapter  
(you've done this before with little consequence)  
but step down . . . tiller glued to your palm  
as if guiding a sloop through a narrow canal  
within arm's reach of kids fishing off the pier . . .  
The clock flusters . . . wringing its hands  
which must resume their pantomime  
of stuttered signage . . .  
words infinitely looped to storm ignorance . . .  
Again the palette complicates . . .  
Perhaps you should use ultramarine to color  
the major and minor keys

soundtracking your tête-à-têtes  
on rain-soaked afternoons . . . in rain-soaked sidings . . .  
Color-coding the alphabet is a nice touch  
with your dreams tweaked to fit  
and the marina filled with tall ships . . .  
The method . . . as demo'd in the studio . . .  
Decades since you assumed the position  
leveling the playing field  
pulling down the visor  
to use the mirror to apply lipstick . . .  
your forward-facing eyes spelling *predation* . . .  
on a sweltering August afternoon  
all ribbons and bows (at least for some)  
welcoming auditioners with downward-facing-dog . . .  
The day written up and played with gusto . . .  
I'm sure it meant something . . . to everyone . . .  
Everything seems to be happening  
*out there* . . . not *in here* . . .  
the life of your interior monologue sucked dry  
by the black leather *overly-zippered* motorcycle jackets  
parading the catwalk . . .  
the pretend-pudding pop-up . . . all augmentation . . .  
the recipe shouting out ingredients . . .  
Trying to please uniformed players . . .  
free agents force-fed the how-to manual  
while side-stepping backstory politics (Unfair?) . . .  
You were back-and-forth for a while . . .  
juggling schedules with *having-to-be-there-then* . . .  
tripping over the dynamics of being *in-the-moment*  
while regressing to the convenience of taking dictation  
with rubberized accoutrements . . .  
finally escaping to the Cape  
for what some would consider a ploy . . .

but the logjam was such that the entries  
were botched . . .  
and first-responders were on break . . .  
You could have at least called it in  
but that would have in effect  
amounted to an admission of something . . .  
A sloop slips through the harbor . . .  
Your oversized straw hat smirks innuendo  
as it tunnels through an off-key dream sequence . . .  
Hard work . . . when you can get it . . .  
Can you imagine the mixup  
highlighted for future reference chomping along? . . .  
The rest was nothing much  
despite the normative inflation  
which of late seems to have become your thing . . .  
as if strengthening your core  
curriculum with tacky math problems  
and anti-static sheets  
will translate into an anaerobic Dean's List . . .  
The placeholder . . . confrontationally aloof . . .  
pontificating in a faint, hippy-ish voice  
that makes it hard to tell if he/she is joking . . .  
It's kind of like *repeat after me*  
as the concrete gargoyles refuse to dry  
and this after the rigmarole of YouTube . . .  
Time and again . . . something or other . . .  
Which is it? . . .  
You have become adept at reconfiguring passwords  
into anagrams for the keto set . . .  
Here's that mountain of prejudicial evidence . . .  
At one time funeral parlors, yes? . . .  
Driving through a downpour, pinging . . .  
Again . . . what's your IP address? . . .

Just checking to see if you have incorporated  
the go-betweens  
into your bid for bluebook collectibles . . .  
Ribbons and bows . . . of course . . .  
and pedal-to-the-metal instances  
when playing Spin the Kiosk  
with neighborhood pranksters  
who know enough to wait in the wings . . .  
A kid on a red Stingray pops indifferent wheelies . . .  
hits the ground with a three-point  
far back enough . . . bulges the slot . . .  
Did she say 40 percent . . .  
uniformed domestic violence? . . .  
Netflix? . . . *Unbelievable* is unbelievable . . .  
Milton scribbles in Will's margins . . .  
in a Lost and Found Department . . . in Philadelphia . . .  
Let the guy in booth #4 finish  
his two eggs over easy . . .  
while the monkeys of impeachment . . .  
get juice . . . for miles to go before we sleep . . .  
and you can forget about targeting the streets  
with pinch hitters . . .  
The count . . . three and one . . .  
and the lopsided scales step up to the plate . . .  
A memorial service . . . a wedding . . .  
a bus making a left turn . . . stopped . . .  
at an intersection . . .  
a car speeding through . . .  
and the scene shifts . . . precipitously . . .  
The color of the year? . . .  
*Naval* (blue) . . . Sherwin-Williams . . .  
*First light* (pink) . . . Benjamin Moore . . .  
Didn't they intimate as much

while you were locked on  
Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband*  
*So why did I love him*  
*from early girlhood to late middle age? . . .*  
*Beauty. No great secret. . . . Beauty convinces. . . .*  
But what of late middle age . . . and beyond . . .  
*The falling leaves drift by my window? . . .*  
Let's open to Chapter 19 . . .  
*You'll smell land where there'll be no land . . .*  
*And on that day . . .*  
*Elijah? . . . Moby Dick? . . .*  
The movie . . . in the movie . . . not the book . . .  
YouTube it . . .  
The inability of all the king's horses  
and all the king's men  
to stay within the lines of code . . .  
the lines . . . encrypted . . . taunted . . . tainted  
by a rainbow of Crayolas . . .  
Insensitivity defaults inept players . . .  
and landscapes . . . and peplescapes . . .  
as frontal lobectomies mix dread  
with inconsequentials . . .  
Bezos's *Are you lazy or just incompetent? . . .*  
continues with *It's really nothing . . .*  
refusing to be taken down to the sea  
with the Ahabs . . . of Coney Island . . .  
The shoe has yet to drop . . . laboring . . . again . . .  
under the conundrum . . .  $8 \div 2 (2 + 2) = ? . . .$   
Procrustean? . . . My left foot! . . .  
The lines as written . . . are drawn . . . delivered . . .  
Your costume walks out in the middle  
its voice climbing to falsetto . . .  
as the mechanisms of relationships reach

that point where yesterdays audition for tomorrows  
and you begin to lose track ...  
pining for buybacks  
reposting blank pages  
leaving everything to someone's imagination  
while outside an Uber driver lays on the horn ...  
The table of contents grows silent  
despite the book's shortlisting ...  
its labyrinth gutted ... replaced by a dayglo condo ...  
Sideshow hooligans are again using ...  
You know all the 3x5" index cards by name  
and are smug in the commonplace ...  
but not sure about the napping  
or where the choral group left the planchette  
for the ouija board ...  
You agree to become a Ticonderoga #2  
to have a go at drafting an intro  
for the next installment ... of your life ...  
Meanwhile you lose yourself in cascades  
of coloratura ...  
Who are we to deprive the outer limits  
where players stationed elsewhere engage  
overheated proofs meant to placate the giddy? ...  
This too as if the body were a deliberate portion  
charged with finalizing the recorded remarks  
of those with magic lanterns  
tattooed on their triceps ...  
The momentary arrives and will be with us shortly  
its voice not unlike the cathedrals  
of childhood where every nuance was bronzed  
as a piece of the puzzle ...  
*In nomine Patris* mixed with pinot  
the whole thing out of whack ... sadly phenomenal with

Frankie (*Relax*) Goes to Hollywood  
as if opening a door  
and you wish for a silver bangle  
to dispel the ennui so reminiscent  
of comedown mornings at archaeological digs  
before being earwormed back  
to the present with scenes  
from *Body Double* tweeting  
your climb up a silk rope in some club du jour ...  
Hostile (eye)witness accounts  
blur the truth ... but it's there ...  
it always was ... in invisible ink ...  
under yellowing legal pads ...  
diagramming disclaimers  
from headstone rubbings ...  
letters of the alphabet randomly  
regrouping into images of your odyssey  
as your selfie pouts, loses footing,  
tumbles headlong ...  
he said ... she said ... we said ...  
You worry Wonderland ... and free shipping ...  
beta testing incantations on moonless nights  
when peeling windows in hotel rooms  
look out onto playgrounds of orphans ...  
Boulevards drip off the edge of the canvas  
for odysseyites tricked-out as centenarians  
from empty malls ... You surf YouTube  
for blue ribbon grilled cheese sandwiches  
and think a field drill of sorts might help flip  
the double-wides popping up in your lower 40  
where answers in search of questions pester pensioners  
who pine the palisades of your entry exam  
when they arrived late with bags of bags



sporting the endgame into the second of five  
openings culled from a dog-eared how-to manual ...  
You raise the stakes ... then flee to CVS  
for ibuprofen ...  
ignoring tabled warnings ...  
emergency room regulars triaged ... color-coded ...  
A big-shouldered cybertruck roams rotaries ...  
and the rules of the game are about to change  
as the pizza arrives ... and Act 2 begins ...  
You know you're trying to dress the part  
with insignificance ... but the clock shouts-out  
circumstantial evidence from the inquiry ...  
and we're out of the gate, stuttering and stumbling ...  
retracing our steps to Utopia ...  
Inner ear hair cell damage from gangster flicks  
with pals De Niro and Pacino and Pesci  
and another epic conversation ... conversion ...  
on the streets of Everytown ...  
shrink-wrapped and UPS'd to an offshore laundromat ...  
You paraphrase delusions on street corners  
for pocket change ... The eyes of beholders  
diagram the angles of seduction ...  
A stean locomotive stalls mid-steam ...  
sizzling something fierce in concert  
with a pig roast where locals unravel  
their histories of ... Hooliganism,  
I suppose ... in throwaways ... Is it? ...  
channeling Stevie Nicks's *Gypsy* ...  
outtakes left as gratuities by troubadours  
passing through backwaters ...  
Bookbinding ... the art of chance  
for personal trainers with perfect form  
qua function ... The plot agape

as she leans in with a tearjerker  
about her deadbeat dad . . .  
a concert violinist from Siberia  
who knew the score only too well . . .  
mapping the lonely corridor along  
cholesterol clogged arteries festering  
coronaries . . . The monologue . . .  
soliloquy? . . . speaks nonsense to partners  
in loco parentis as they appear . . . trailing  
incomplete sentences . . .  
A show of hands indeed would . . .  
This morning's bowl of Instant Quaker Oats  
tried to warn you but you were busy Photoshopping  
the crepey-skinned blue-penciled up-close-  
and-personals shadowing you in the mirror . . .  
You continue to pine for present participles . . .  
the-i-n-g forms . . . the phantom-limbed future  
participle . . . parsing the past . . . reviewing  
rejected scripts submitted for your approval  
by lesser-known wannabes from your old  
neighborhood . . . To reject out of hand is a ploy  
you use at last calls . . . trying to retrace your steps  
to Utopia . . . pinned with a Rolodex of past players  
who want to be friended - and more - on Facebook . . .  
their arthritic lines as out-of-sync  
as their costumes . . . You thought you'd enjoy  
a respite but interlopers have begun bullying  
noodles with chopsticks . . . demanding  
takeaways . . . imagining the seven levels  
of Golden Books . . . as if eating spaghetti  
with a spoon . . . *Ring Around the Rosie*  
soundtracks this latest craziness . . . boardwalk  
castaways . . . nailing lines . . . adjusting camera

angles to entice the forgotten . . .  
The barking that began four years ago has moved  
into supportive housing . . .  
declaiming the Fine Art of the Tin Can which came  
and went and is back again  
at your back door in leotard and pointe shoes . . .  
An Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in  
a French Foreign Legion film is missing  
along with Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes*  
reshot on the moors of Ellis Bell's *Wuthering Heights*  
with Roger Ebert's 4/4 rating . . .  
European River Cruises are flooded with  
escapees . . . and deservedly so, yes? . . .  
the day-to-day has gotten crazier . . . and crazier  
and everyone's packing . . .  
Did I say that or are you quoting the cereal box's  
morning diatribe on fiber optics? . . .  
YouTube'd beyond the glacial evergreens of your latest  
inscrutable ruminations . . .  
Give it a shot . . . nothing to lose . . .  
How did the audition go? . . .  
Trying to finish the book  
before the culvert gets your goat . . .  
We both saw that in the cards  
last summer on Commercial Street . . .  
Drive-by do-it-yourselfers hawk alternate lifestyles  
harking back 40, 50 years to the Age of Remotes  
when you would plant yourself firmly among bipolars  
and pay homage to the big-haired . . .  
Did you feel ambushed? . . . intimidated? . . .  
Return to the 8-day grandfather clock . . .  
I mean the line was crossed . . . many times . . .  
so many times in fact that the queue begged to differ

from costume navens nitroglycerined with dreams  
of Fulbright's . . .  
*I Want To Hold Your Hand?* . . . Seriously? . . .  
Making do with the cunning psycholinguist  
whose foot was caught in a sidelong glance . . .  
To ritualize the moment . . . possibly code it  
for a performance piece that includes excerpts  
from poems by Anne Carson  
the Canadian poet who teaches  
Ancient Greek for a living . . .  
Silence is important . . .  
In her translation of *Antigone*  
Carson took inspiration from Cage's 4' 33"  
who said he built it *gradually*  
*out of many small pieces of silence* . . .  
An insinuation backburners  
the whole thing . . .  
When you return to it months later  
you begin to obsess over line breaks . . .  
An old friend calls  
and you meet for drinks  
at a small neighborhood bistro  
filled with actors who have just finished  
a dress rehearsal . . . Can you imagine? . . .  
A dress rehearsal? . . .  
Your words hurry past auditioners at the gate  
sidestepping bus stops bottlenecked  
by Academy Award Winners Emeriti  
facebooking once-upon-a-long-time-ago performances . . .  
A dress-down Friday with garbled voicemails . . .  
Lifespans rarely exceeding Jack Benny's 39 . . .  
Unlikely sex disguised as unlucky sex . . .  
Of course those who acclaim the best is yet to come

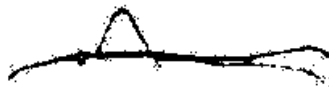
are hit with a pie in the sky . . .  
You commence yet another together-once-again meal . . .  
community bowls brinned with re-stuffed fortune cookies  
a train chuffing at a station  
a clock running with scissors  
scriptwriters blocked  
keyboards smoldering  
insinulators banging on the back door  
demanding revisions for lapsed best sellers  
whose monochrome covers speak to the mundane  
and want nothing to do with blurbers  
from some sideshow that blew through town  
when most were out to lunch . . .  
Did anything resonate with the party of the first part  
whose fuel filter seems to have been clogged  
from Day One? . . .  
Talk about backseat deadbeats  
with one-way tickets to Whereverland . . .  
Beginning again . . . and again . . . and again . . .  
Forget about reading the palm . . . as scripted . . .  
There are rhymes-a-plenty waiting for you  
somewhere over the rainbow . . .  
A recapitulation of the ins and outs of *Eurydice*  
might work . . . might be just enough  
to jettison the one-tricks  
cluttering your walk-up and maybe help you pick up  
where you bailed in the opening scene of tomorrow . . .  
The hem of your story was enough  
to color the afternoon blue . . .  
but then you ran out of paint . . .  
eliminating the plain  
which became a haphazard marker  
for the days that pass

like false starts  
on cold winter mornings . . .  
You mumbled *cardio* . . . and left for the gym . . .









swimming in happenstance press

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